

# THE COLORADO MAGAZINE

Published bi-monthly by  
The State Historical Society of Colorado

VOL. IX

Denver, Colorado, March, 1932

No. 2

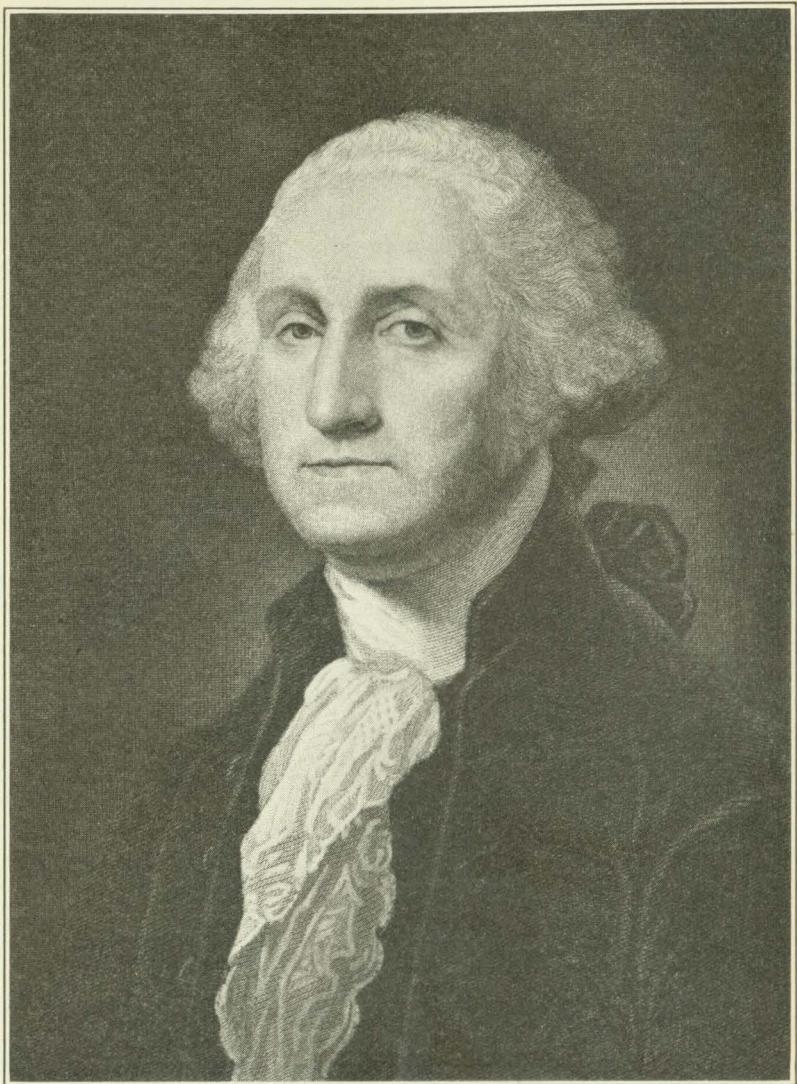
## George Washington and Colorado

In this Bi-Centennial year the nation pays tribute to "The Father of His Country." The unequalled service of George Washington in winning the War for Independence, and after that arduous struggle leading the way in welding jealous and discordant states into a potentially-great nation earned for him the gratitude of succeeding generations. The personal qualities of the man, as well as the public services of the general and statesman, win our honor and affection for the courage, fortitude and wisdom so admirably blended in our first President.

In one sense it may seem a far cry from George Washington to Colorado, for when Washington was born, two hundred years ago, no English-speaking person had yet set foot on Colorado soil. Yet Washington's native colony—Virginia—included, according to the royal charters of 1606 and 1609, the land of present Colorado. For the grant given the London Company extended from sea to sea, embracing a domain of imperial proportions, could only that extensive claim be won and maintained.

But the granting of a 2,600-mile strip across an unexplored and unknown continent was quite a different matter from making good that claim by exploration, conquest and occupation. Officials of the London Company and of the "Old Dominion" little dreamed of the extent or magnitude of the mountain ranges, the rivers, prairies and deserts that separated the struggling towns and plantations on the Virginia seaboard from the distant coast of the Pacific. The sea-to-sea bounds of Virginia appeared on English-drawn maps of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but actual conditions beyond the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi showed quite another picture.

When George Washington was born, the region of present Colorado was already debatable ground between the expansive nations, Spain and France. Almost two centuries before that date Spain had sent her elaborately-equipped expedition under Don Francisco Coronado into the far interior of western America, to the very borders of Colorado. Her claim through exploration was supplemented by actual occupation when Juan de Onate, at the close of the sixteenth century, founded the frontier colony, New Mexico, on the upper waters of the Rio Grande. From this far



GEORGE WASHINGTON

northern base Spanish explorers, goldseekers and slave hunters traversed the region of present Colorado.

Then by way of the St. Lawrence, Great Lakes and Mississippi came explorer, trader and missionary bearing the flag of France. They coursed the length of the Mississippi and pushed westward to the Rocky Mountains, claiming the vast drainage area of the Mississippi Valley and naming it Louisiana in honor of their French king.

Thus, when Washington was born there were three conflicting claims to the territory of Colorado—Spanish, French, and English. But, as yet, Spain and France were the only real contenders, they alone having sent out expeditions that penetrated so far toward the interior of the continent. The Anglo-American colonies were still busy sinking their roots deep into the soil of the Atlantic seaboard preparatory to beginning their steady, irresistible westward march across the continent. Before the birth of Washington the international rivalry which had begun for the possession of western America was manifested in a French-Indian attack that almost annihilated Captain Villasur's Spanish expedition on the South Platte River in 1720.

While seven-year-old George Washington was learning his first lessons in school, the first recorded French expedition made its way from the Mississippi Valley through Colorado to the Spanish frontier capital of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The French made this expedition and subsequent ones in an effort to open trade with the Spanish colonies. But the jealous and self-sufficient Spaniards treated the French traders as unwelcome guests.

Then international rivalry assumed world proportions in the Seven Years (or French and Indian) War. As a young lieutenant colonel, Washington played a not insignificant part in that war, helping to defeat France and thus eliminate her as a claimant to central and western America. But the war left Spain in undisputed control of the territory of Colorado during the remaining years of Washington's life, and until the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

While Washington was leading his Continental Army on its first campaigns in defense of the newly-proclaimed independence, the western portion of Colorado was for the first time being made known to white men. In fact, it was in that same July when pioneers of Freedom were signing the Declaration of Independence at Philadelphia that Spanish pioneers of discovery were exploring western Colorado. Father Escalante and his thirteen companions, endeavoring to open a westward route through Colorado to California, were also making history in that memorable year 1776,

though in a much smaller way than their contemporaries in the Thirteen Colonies.

Washington's work as a western surveyor and as a promoter of western land development in the region of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley were aids in putting on foot that "westward movement" that made possible an English-speaking Colorado and that has so vitally affected and directed the destiny of our nation. He had a vision of western development that must have projected itself far beyond the existing confines of the federated states.



COURTESY OF THE DENVER POST

THE WASHINGTON ELM, WASHINGTON PARK, DENVER  
Scion of the Elm under which Washington took command of the Continental Army, July 3, 1775.

Colorado, having entered the Union as a state on the hundredth anniversary of American Independence, is fittingly called the "Centennial State." As such, she feels a special relation and attachment to the birth of the nation, and by the same token to the man who was without peer in achieving that independence. The name of Washington is perpetuated in almost every city and village in Colorado. Schools, streets and parks bear his name, and one of our counties is honored with his name. It may be observed

that on the map of our country are written the affections of a people. The sons of Spain and of France perpetuated in the place names of the regions they explored and occupied, their attachment to the Saints. The Anglo-Americans have payed honor to humbler objects of their regard. But it is evidence of their transcendent esteem for one man that no other name perhaps has been so widely and frequently stamped upon the nomenclature of America as that of Washington.

Colorado's heritage from Washington is more in the realm of the spirit and of national endowments than in immediate connection to Colorado soil. General and Leader in the cause of independence, Councillor in framing the epochal Constitution, First President in launching the ship of state, the bequest of Washington is to the Nation rather than to any State. That common heritage Colorado is grateful to share and she is proud to do special homage this Bi-Centennial year to the man who was, as Henry Lee so aptly phrased it, "First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of his Countrymen!"

## Furs and Forts of the Rocky Mountain West\*

ARTHUR J. FYNNE

Along with the typical trader and trapper were other personages of interest who were employed in one capacity or another in the fur business of the Rockies. Next to obtaining the peltries from the animals was the problem of transportation, and many different sorts of people were engaged in conveying them from the canyons of the Platte and Arkansas, for fifteen hundred miles, to St. Louis, the natural mart toward which the trails and rivers converged. In the upper country, after being taken from the traps by Indians and white trappers, the furs were packed on the backs of mules and horses, or borne downstream in light watercraft. Taken to certain points along the water courses, they were moved on by more pretentious conveyances.

Canoes, made from cottonwood logs and best known as dug-outs, were often big enough to carry large loads of peltries down the various rivers, even to the Mississippi itself. The Mackinaw, a flat-bottomed boat thirty or forty feet in length and from ten to fifteen feet in width, was able to carry several tons of fur, and was especially needful in conveying buffalo pelts. The much discussed bull boats, made by sewing together and stretching over a wooden frame several buffalo skins, were, in shape, round at the ends, and in size some twelve by thirty feet and perhaps two feet in depth.

\*This is the second and concluding portion of the article by the late Dr. Arthur J. Fynn, which was begun in our issue of November, 1931.—Ed.

On account of their requiring only a few inches of draught, they were used on the shallow rivers sweeping out from the mountains over the plains.

While each of the simpler conveyances was used to carry on a more or less important and independent business, there was, especially in the later years of the fur trade, close association between them and the larger craft operating to the eastward, nearer the mouths of larger rivers. The Missouri River steamboat, which had supplanted the old and rude keelboat of the days of Lewis and Clark, was the most helpful and spectacular boat of this far inland country. She stood imposingly high above the surrounding floats, like a proud hen above her brood of chickens. She skimmed over the smoother waters and pushed her way through the opposing currents like a thing of life, to the utter astonishment of the prairie-dwellers. Her revolving side wheels, tall, smoking chimneys, throbbing engines, and fluttering flags impressed the casual visitors from mountain and plain with the fact that the fur industry was pushing toward the mountains, over prairie and plain, as a harbinger of civilization. In glimpsing this panorama, this moving procession of human beings, reaching from Pikes Peak to the Mississippi River, it must not be forgotten that many loads of peltries on the backs of animals or in the lumber wagons of the day were conveyed from the mountain trapping places to the Missouri-Mississippi waterway entirely over the land routes, chief among which was the great Santa Fe Trail.

This big, many-sided activity, therefore, drew unto itself a variety of individuals, with special qualifications and peculiarities in various directions. Three nationalities—Americans, French, and Spanish—were always in evidence. On the ground floor were the nomadic Indian and the anomalous trapper. Closely associated with these were the trader, the manager of the trading post, the clerk, the camp keeper, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the cook, the boatman with his crew, and a score of other individuals, or groups of individuals, much diversified in culture, character, and general efficiency.

The places at which these many sorts and conditions of men met to transact business differed in accordance with the character of the business and the conveniences of the locality.

In a remote corner of the country, here and there, was the rendezvous, a converging point which had been agreed upon at the annual gathering in the former years. Regular company employees, free trappers, bands of natives, wandering fur-gatherers, and other specimens of humanity, having anything to buy or sell, came with their goods, disposed of them and obtained their necessary equipment for the coming year. Then the trains of horses

which had moved westward over the uplands for hundreds of miles from the East with their heterogeneous loads of merchandise moved backward to their various destinations with their bundles of peltries.

The rendezvous was a peculiar and picturesque feature in western history during the romantic days of the fur industry. The secluded spot of earth, enlivened by patches of forests, jagged rocks, yellow grass plots, and interspersing wild shrubbery, the clear, stirring air tranquilized by murmurings of gentle streams, presented, either in the glare of the noonday sun or in the soft light of the star-studded sky, a fascinating scene for the transaction of that unusual line of business. Add to this the variety of strange characters, with their strange costumes, strange weapons and accouterments, strange speech, and strange behavior, and the representation is unique. Before the breaking of camp there was likely to be much gambling and drinking, and many an irresolute trapper would return to his lonely retreat "empty handed, heavy hearted" after a week of debauch.

The overland journey from the meeting place of trader and trapper, whether to nearby river points or to the more noted marts on the larger eastern water courses, presented a lively spectacle. The burden-bearing animals with their valuable packs moved downward over the hot, dry plains, giving to the whole caravan the suggestion of a great, sluggish centipede. Each pack averaged about a hundred pounds, and its value was determined by the kind of peltries of which it was composed.<sup>1</sup> The price paid for good beaver skins was about six dollars per pound. The load on the back of a mule might, therefore, be worth five hundred dollars or more.

Skins of the various animals of the Rocky Mountains were often hidden by the trappers when there was danger of their being lost, stolen, or taken by desperadoes. They were put into dry pits in the sandy earth and covered with leaves, branches of trees, and sod, in such a way as to conceal all evidence of soil disturbance. Dust, half rotten bark of trees, or unsuspicuous rubbish of any kind was employed to secure the buried articles from the scent of wild beasts or the sharp eyes of human marauders. Fires were sometimes built, in order to lessen still further any evidence of surface disturbance.

Of all centers of activity, however, throughout this great fur-bearing region, the trading posts or forts, serving generally in the two capacities of protection and trade, were the most character-

<sup>1</sup>A pack of furs usually contained ten buffalo robes, fourteen bear, sixty otter, eighty raccoon, one hundred and twenty foxes, or six hundred muskrat skins. H. M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. I, p. 40.

istic and important. They were scattered over a great area of wilderness, like oases on deserts, and were especially numerous along the Missouri and its tributaries. Within the borders of Colorado they served their purposes with striking efficiency. The greater number of the famous ones were out on the plains within approximately short distances from the mountains. A few, however, were more or less well-equipped mountain forts and were situated where exposure to hostile white and red men was most keenly felt.

Whether on mountain or plain, there was always a similarity in the general construction and most prominent features; for, wherever found, the two chief factors, defense and trade, were always outstanding. The variation of environment gave to the one or the other of these factors the ascendancy, arising from either locality or contingency.

They were typically quadrangular in shape, with thick walls two stories in height, numerous port holes for cannons and small arms, two bastions at diagonally opposite corners, barracks, blacksmith equipment, and other needful incidentals.

While danger was always something to be guarded against in migratory movements west of the Mississippi River, the necessity of pronounced military structures did not appear until near the close of the fur-trade period, and it reached on into the days when the white men were overrunning the country, killing the buffalo, and extending railroad tracks over the hunting grounds.

In the sixties, great bitterness had arisen between the two races, and the necessity of erecting substantial forts in the Rocky Mountain country was keenly felt by the frontiersmen. As examples, Fort Mitchell, in Nebraska, was built in 1864; Fort Fetterman, in Wyoming, in 1867; Fort Casper, in Wyoming, in 1864; Fort Reno, in Wyoming, in 1865.

In the area now comprising the state of Colorado, perhaps the most noted of military posts was Fort Massachusetts, near the Sangre de Cristo Pass on the eastern slope of the San Luis Valley. It was built in 1852, but abandoned in 1858, at which time Fort Garland was founded a few miles distant, on the site of the present Fort Garland.

At the other end of the state, to the northeast, was Fort Sedgwick, a typical temporary military post, built in 1864. It was established to protect the vanguard of whites who were gradually pushing their way toward the Rocky Mountains along with the construction of railroads, enterprises which naturally incensed the natives. In New Mexico this type of fort was well represented in old forts Marcy and Union.

The structures, however, which are naturally associated with

the western country were those larger ones chiefly on the plains and built at an earlier time primarily for trade, with protective features sufficient to make them safe to their inmates. Of this class of more pretentious posts was the well known Fort Laramie, in the southeastern part of what is today Wyoming, on the Laramie River, and Fort Bridger, in the southwestern part of the same state. Within the area of what is today the boundary of Colorado were numerous forts, erected to meet the general business of the times, and, in some cases, to foster the traffic of rival traders. The larger waterways naturally drew the majority of such structures to their banks, but lesser streams also, here and there, offered attractive sites which were successfully utilized. The South Platte, with its several advantageous mountain affluents, and a long portion of its course running almost parallel with the main ranges, was an outstanding fort-sustaining stream.

In 1832, near the junction of the South Platte and Clear Creek, on the northern outskirts of the Denver of today, a trading post was built by a French-Canadian trapper and trader, Louis Vasquez. Clear Creek itself was known in those days as Vasquez Fork, and very fittingly bore the name of that notable pioneer merchant of the South Platte district. Reports affirm that the post was constructed of cottonwood logs reenforced by adobe walls. Before rival forts sprang up it drew trade from the trapping grounds extending considerably north of the Cache la Poudre and along the mountains southward to the prolific streams of South Park.

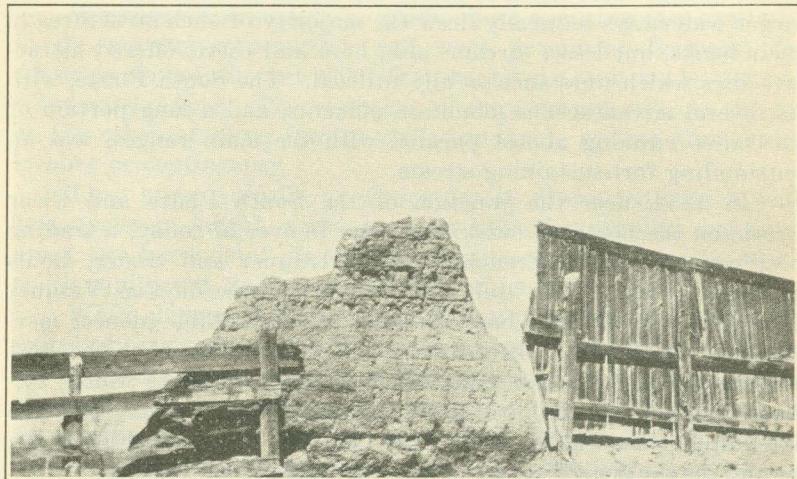
In 1836, Lancaster P. Lupton established on the east side of the South Platte a fort, first called Lancaster but afterward Lupton, from which the town of Ft. Lupton has derived its name. Remnants of this structure are still in existence.

About five miles farther down the Platte was Fort Jackson, built by Henry Fraeb and Peter A. Sarpy. It was used as a trading post for two years only, 1837-38, and was then forsaken.

At a distance of about a mile down the South Platte River from the mouth of the St. Vrain Creek stood Fort St. Vrain. In the palmy days of the thirties, it was the largest and most important structure of its kind on the South Platte River and was a branch of the famous Bent's Fort on the Arkansas, being built by Colonel Ceran St. Vrain and the Bent brothers. It was built of adobe bricks and measured about one hundred and twenty-five feet in length by seventy-five in width, with walls fourteen feet in height. It was in many ways more pretentious than the usual run of the trading forts of those days, and was modeled on much the same plan as its archetype down on the Arkansas. It stood about half way between Ft. Laramie and Ft. Bent and on a well beaten, commerce-inviting trail joining the two. On the ruins of St. Vrain

Fort the Colorado Daughters of the American Revolution have placed a handsome marker.

There were several other posts—generally of short duration and little business and leaving to the state barely anything more than a name—which were scattered over various portions of the northern plains. Their chief value to us is their suggestiveness of the diversified life and the motley caste of actors playing their parts on that broad arena.



A PORTION OF THE WALL OF FORT LUPTON AS IT APPEARED IN 1913

Five miles below the Lancaster-Lupton post, Louis Vasquez and Andrew Sublette built Fort Vasquez, similar in character to those already noticed. From the highway its ruins are visible today, with walls standing two or three feet above the ground.

Over at the western border of the state, on the left bank of the Green River, stood Fort David Crockett, a one story adobe building constructed by a little group of men who had cast their interests into the fur business of that then somewhat remote transmontane region.

Another of the dauntless French fort-builders, Antoine Robidoux, built a trading station on the left bank of the Gunnison River about two miles below the mouth of the Uncompahgre. Erected in the early thirties, it survived only a few years before it was burned by the Ute Indians.

Two St. Louis traders, Gantt and Blackwell, built a small post, in 1832, on the north bank of the Arkansas some five miles east of the mouth of Fountain Creek. Facts concerning this enterprise are few, with the exception that it was known as Gantt's Fort, and

was succeeded in the early forties by the well known Pueblo, the rather inglorious predecessor of our "Pittsburgh of the West."

The Pueblo was probably constructed by George Simpson, an Indian trader, and others, and the eccentric James P. Beckwourth claimed to have played a principal role in its erection.

This place bore a bad reputation on account of the disreputable characters accustomed to gather there. Old trappers, hunters, traders, and wandering malefactors—vagabond Frenchmen, Americans, Indians, Mexicans, with a heterogeneous mass of Indian wives, resorted to this old post, exchanged goods, stole valuables, drank Mexican whiskey, quarreled, and murdered in true freebooting style.

After the massacre of Christmas day, 1854, in which about fifteen white men were butchered, the place acquired the reputation of being haunted, and rapidly went to ruin.

In 1826 the four Bent brothers and Ceran St. Vrain entered into the business of fort-building in the southern part of the state by erecting a rude trading-post on the north bank of the Arkansas River at a point approximately half way between the sites of the present Pueblo and Canon City. In character it was a temporary stockade, and was protected by heavy stakes driven into the ground inclosing the living and trading quarters. After two years it was abandoned.

There were several good reasons for taking this step. There was destined to be an increase in business. To be near or upon the famous Santa Fe Trail was an almost inestimable advantage. At a point farther down the river, the traders would be thrown into close relationship with a half dozen great Indian tribes of the plains and could participate in the traffic in buffalo hides.

The spot chosen for the new post was down the Arkansas River at a distance of about seventy miles, and half way between the present towns of La Junta and Las Animas.

As a trading fort of those times, Bent's establishment overshadowed all others and may serve in this connection as the best illustration of such structures.<sup>2</sup>

The six Bent brothers were all more or less closely identified with Colorado history, though two of them were never within the borders of the state. They were of French-Canadian descent and were natives of St. Louis. Charles, the oldest, was born in 1799 and Silas, the youngest, about two decades later. John and Silas never appeared upon Colorado soil, as already indicated, but Charles, William, Robert and George, along with Ceran St. Vrain, another Canadian, having already been employed for a short time

<sup>2</sup>The State Historical Society of Colorado has among its collections in the State Museum a replica of Bent's Fort.

in the American Fur Company, cast their fortunes into the fur activities of the Rockies.

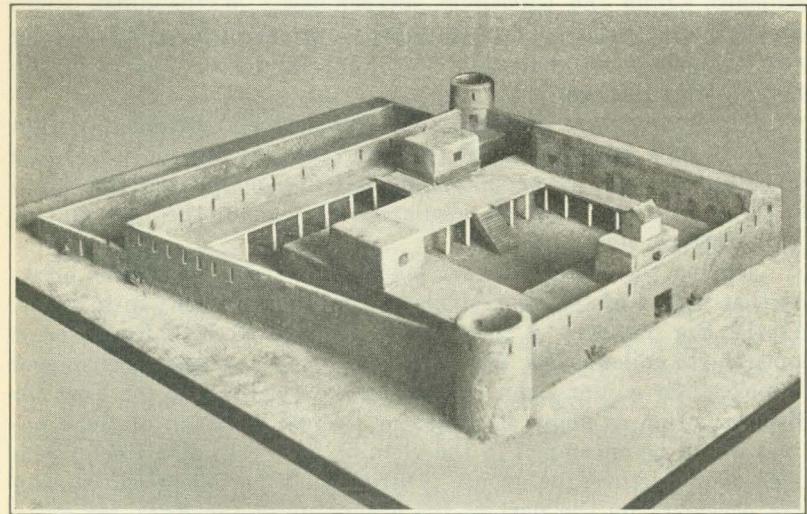
The structure was begun in 1828 but was not completed until 1832. In order to make it safe against fire, adobe clay was used chiefly in constructing it. Such material also recommended itself because it made the building cool in summer and warm in winter. A great quantity of wool was brought on wagons from New Mexico as a substitute for straw in making the bricks.

Four years were consumed in constructing the fort because of various unavoidable delays. One hundred and fifty Mexicans and several whites were employed in doing the work. Smallpox broke out among the employees, which caused a suspension of activities for a while. It is reported that at the same time the disease was contracted by William Bent, Ceran St. Vrain, Kit Carson, and several other more or less notable persons and, though none of this group died, they were all more or less pitted.

When completed the building stood on the north side of the Arkansas River and nearly square with the points of the compass. There seems to be a difference of opinion regarding the exact space enclosed by the outer wall. The generally accepted figures are one hundred and fifty by one hundred feet. There is authority for the statement that, from east to west, the building measured one hundred and thirty-five feet, and from north to south one hundred and eighty feet. The walls were fifteen feet in height and six or seven feet in thickness at the base, tapering to two feet at the top. The main entrance was thirty feet in width through the east wall by means of two massive plank doors, which were plated with nail heads to insure them against fire. Above this entrance was a square watchtower, surmounted by a belfry, which in turn supported a flagstaff. Reaching upward to the height of thirty feet and bulging out from the building in the usual fashion stood two bastions, or round towers, fitted into the walls at the northwest and southeast corners. They were ten feet in diameter within walls and on the lower floor of each were large loopholes for cannon, and on the upper floor smaller ones for ordinary firearms. Since these towers stood out many feet away from the walls, with the exception of each narrow line of contact at the corners, an opportunity was given for observing and firing upon an enemy coming from any direction. It can be seen that, with such an arrangement, an enemy was in as great danger lurking under the shadow of the wall as if he stood out in the open. Under such conditions wall-scaling would also be impossible. For further efficiency in the matter of observing an approaching foe a long, powerful telescope, balanced on a pivot, stood in the watchtower, which had windows on every side. Here also swung a little meal-time bell. Within

easy reaching distance along the walls were hung muskets, lances, sabers, and all other ordinary sorts of frontier weapons. The outside walls were pierced by loopholes. At vital points throughout the building were stationed cannons and other ordnance to be used at a moment's notice in case of attack.

Fort Bent was much more than an ordinary trading post. It was an institution, standing like a castle in the middle ages far away from the stirring, throbbing world on the outside. Within the thick, outlying protective walls was an isolated community, enjoying many blessings of civilized safety and hospitality in contrast to the dangers and hardships that loomed up immediately when the outside world was reached. In the busy time of year there were a hundred employees, consisting of many classes and conditions of servitude; clerks, traders, trappers, mechanics, herdsmen, teamsters, common laborers, and several children. A resident physician cared for the health of the inmates and ministered to travelers. Many of the group had Indian wives. William Bent, the chief personage, married a Cheyenne maiden, to whom were born four children. After the death of his first wife he married her sister.



A REPLICA OF BENT'S FORT  
(Owned by the State Historical Society and on exhibition among its collections in the State Museum, Denver)

The various rooms were comfortably sheltered with permanent roofs and walls. The barracks were provided with the necessities and conveniences demanded by the diverse occupants. In the center of the large court stood the press for squeezing robes and furs

into compact and convenient bundles for shipping. At one side was the indispensable blacksmith shop. At the back stood the billiard room and the bar room, although the use of liquors was very restricted, and carousals were not allowed. In convenient nooks and corners were numerous warehouses and storerooms. Several women were occupants of the building—mostly Indian wives of prominent white personages engaged in various kinds of business. Children amused themselves as best they could in their more or less restricted quarters. "In the kitchen presided Charlotte, the negress cook, famed for her pumpkin pies."<sup>3</sup>

Back of the Fort proper was the corral, inclosed by an eight-foot wall, with a small opening into the court and a larger one at the extreme west end for the entrance and exit of animals. On the top of the surrounding wall thriving cactus plants grew, and served as an excellent protection against wall-scaling. Magpies, eagles, and mocking birds were encouraged to make their homes about the Fort to add liveliness to the scene. At a short distance away was the icehouse for the storage of meat and other perishable goods. Holidays and festival occasions were duly observed. A piano graced one of the apartments and other instruments were in evidence. Like the Christmas merrymaking of the olden times which Walter Scott tells of, authority was thrown aside, dancing was engaged in without respect to rank, and the dangers of the morrow were disregarded.

The winter days brought many travelers and strangers within the Fort, and news furnished by them from the outside world was joyfully received. Newspapers and letters came in over the Santa Fe Trail with approximate regularity throughout the year, but at comparatively long intervals.

During the colder weather business about the Fort was brisk. At that period of the year Mexicans and natives came in to trade. At the Big Timbers, a twenty-mile stretch of cottonwood forest some thirty miles below the Fort, many Indians were accustomed to make their winter camp. Bringing their peltries to the Fort for disposal, often as many as fifteen or twenty thousand of these natives would be encamped in the vicinity for weeks at a time, forming a most picturesque group. During such periods great caution was necessary on the part of the occupants of the Fort, for great quantities of venomous liquor from Taos and other parts of New Mexico would incite the drinkers to deeds of murder among themselves, and especially against the inmates of the building.

Indians as a rule were not allowed to enter the Fort. A counter was arranged at the door entrance over which business was transacted. William Bent was the head and front of this trade.

<sup>3</sup>E. Sabin, *Kit Carson Days*, 191.

Charles, his brother, and Ceran St. Vrain spent most of their time in Taos. Aside from the prime business of buying and selling furs, a lively trade at the Fort was carried on in disposing of horses, mules, and trappings.

When the April days roll around scenes about the building are lively. The native tribes gradually disappear for the hunting season. William Bent is preparing for his annual trip to the Missouri River, five or six hundred miles away. To go and return will require a half year. Twenty or thirty wagons are carefully filled with bundles of peltries. Ox teams are hitched to wagons, and the great procession moves down the river at the rate of about ten miles per day. Camping places, good wood, pure water, and productive grass-plots must be carefully selected. Wagons must be greased and occasionally repaired, guards must protect the procession by day and night, and much attention must be given to the nourishment and convenience of man and beast. Sand, dust, mud, and storms are destined to be encountered, man and beast sicken and perhaps die, but at length the end of the journey is reached. The contents of the wagons are disposed of, and those same wagons are reloaded with food, clothing, weapons, and other necessities of life. Then the long homeward journey is begun, and ended when the leaves of the mountain trees are falling, as a result of the autumnal frosts.

For twenty years this remarkable building, with all its activities, its tragedies and comedies, existed. In the early and middle forties, when traffic on the Santa Fe Trail was at its height, Bent's Fort assumed the combined proportions of a great Oriental caravansary and an Occidental mercantile house. Here it stood on the plains, the central point of interest, the isolated refuge of wanderers on a widespread danger-abounding region. Here dwelt the scout, guide, and protector of travelers in a strange land. Here, at intervals for several years, Kit Carson was a resident hunter, supplying the Fort with buffalo meat. Here, in 1846, General Kearny, on his memorable march from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe, halted for several days to arrange supplies for his soldiers.

General Kearny, in possession of Santa Fe in 1846, appointed Charles Bent Governor of New Mexico. In the following year a conspiracy was formed, resulting on January 19, 1847, in a massacre in which Governor Bent was killed at his residence in Taos.

Robert and George Bent died at the famous old Fort; but William, who from the beginning had been the dominant spirit—in fact, for the first few years of its existence it was called Fort William—bravely bore the burdens and responsibilities connected with it. For several years he was a government freighter.

In the late forties he began negotiations for the sale of the Fort to the government. Since its value had been tested in several ways and especially in its use as a base of supplies for General Kearny's troops when operating in New Mexico, such a purpose seemed reasonable. There was also a more impressible reason. He remarked that he felt lonesome in the old place. His wife and two brothers had died there, and memories of the past haunted him. He is said to have offered the structure for the modest sum of sixteen thousand dollars, but the government hesitated, proffering twelve thousand. Impatient at the slow progress made by the government in attempting to consummate the proposition, the owner loaded all his valuables on sixteen wagons and moved away from the building, having set fire to what was combustible. The building was restored in the early sixties and served for a time as an overland mail and stage station. After being again abandoned, it fell into ruin. Today a granite monument marks the spot on which the half venerable building stood. "William Bent was undoubtedly the first permanent white settler in what is now Colorado, and for a long time he was not only its first settler but remained its most important white citizen."<sup>4</sup>

On the same noted river, at Big Timbers, about forty miles to the east of the ruined fort, another, built of stone and adobe, was constructed in 1853 and 1854, slightly smaller and less pretentious than its model. Its walls were nearly as high and at its two diagonally opposite corners stood the conspicuous bastions. Bent used it as a trading post till the autumn of 1859, when he sold it to the government. Colonel Sedgwick, whose dramatic death occurred at Spotsylvania in the Civil War, and from whom Sedgwick County received its name, was sent into this region during the same year to fight the Indians, especially the Kiowas. Large supplies of commissary goods came from the East about the same time, and the construction of larger quarters to accommodate increasing soldiers, officers, animals, food, and equipment was carried on in 1860. It was at first called Fort Wise in honor of Governor Wise of Virginia, but in 1861 the Civil War had burst upon the country and the name was changed to Fort Lyon in remembrance of the death of that brave general at Wilson's Creek, Missouri, in August of the same year.

The old fort served its purpose during the period of hostilities, but a flood in the Arkansas undermined its walls in 1866, which made it useless as a military post. It was used afterwards for some time as a stage station.

A new Fort Lyon was built at a distance of about twenty miles farther up the river. It is today a notable government hospital.

While fur trading with the Indians was a notable feature in relation to all the western posts, it was an especially important factor in connection with those on the Arkansas. Here first of all was the great Santa Fe Trail, along which the product moved in vast quantities. Again the present states of Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas held within their borders important and populous hunting tribes—Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Kiowas, Comanches, and several others—that naturally and conveniently came to the Bent buildings to dispose of their wares.

Having married among the Indians, William Bent had great advantages in carrying on business with them. He had no rival in the whole fur-producing region in that business to which he gave the greatest efforts of his life.

It can hardly be reiterated too often that the trappers and fur traders were the real pioneers of this great western land. For forty years fur-gathering was the chief industry of the state.

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<sup>4</sup>George B. Grinnell, *Bent's Old Fort and Its Builders*, 19.

The Raising of the Stars and Stripes Over Manila,  
August 13, 1898

GEN. W. C. BROWN\*

Colorado Volunteers played a leading role in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War and it was a Colorado officer who raised the first United States flag over Manila. The First Colorado Infantry, United States Volunteers, was the regiment selected to lead the advance in the attack on Manila, for Colonel Irving Hale's guiding genius, persistence, energy, and military ability brought the regiment to the high state of efficiency which caused its selection for this high honor.

As giving details of the events of the day Fort San Antonio de Abad was captured, the following is taken from a letter written by General Hale, September 24, 1898, to his wife in Denver:

"\* \* \* The exact circumstances were as follows. Before we left our trenches Gen. Greene handed a flag to Brooks and told him to raise it in place of the Spanish flag on Fort San Antonio de Abad as soon as we captured it. When I ordered I Company around the flank of Spanish works just before we made the final rush, Brooks asked me to let him go with them, as he thought they would be first into the works, and I told him to go ahead. As they rushed in behind the parapet between Fort and beach, Brooks ran

\*Brig. Gen. Brown, U. S. A., retired, has been a legal resident of Colorado since 1873, the year he entered the army. He took a prominent part in several Indian campaigns in the Northwest from the 1870s to the 1890s. Of late he has interested himself in historical matters, especially pertaining to the Indian Wars, gathering and presenting new data and locating historical sites. He lives in Denver today.—Ed.

ahead and into the rear entrance of the stone fort—the first man in—while Capt. Grove of I Company who was with him climbed over a shed onto the outer wall of the fort. Brooks glanced hastily into the interior rooms as he passed them to make sure there were no Spaniards lurking there, and while he was doing this and just before he reached the flag Lister, who had followed him in, began pulling down the flag while Brooks unrolled his flag to raise. Then McCoy came up and helped Lister pull down the flag, when Brooks tied his to the rope and raised it.



A. McDONALD BROOKS, FIRST LIEUTENANT AND ADJUTANT,  
FIRST COLORADO INFANTRY, U. S. A.  
(Taken at Manila, Sept., 1898.)

"I entered the fort about the same time as McCoy, but after glancing over the interior a moment and seeing that there were apparently no live Spaniards there, came out in rear of it, looked over the ground, ordered Grove to take his Company forward to second line of parapet to hold that and then as the Companies came up, placed them in the trench behind fort to repel any possible attack from woods across river, which actually began in a few minutes.

"I took no thought as to the flag business, knowing that Brooks would attend to it, and considering that the proper placing of troops to be much more important. \* \* \* I give you the actual facts so that you can state them if the matter ever comes up. \* \* \*

"Irving."

The officers referred to in the above quoted letter are: Lt. Col. H. B. McCoy, who hauled down the Spanish flag; Capt. William R. Grove, later a Medal of Honor man; Lt. Ralph B. Lister, and the Regimental Adj't. Lieut. A. McD. Brooks, who raised the Stars and Stripes, and who for many years past has been a resident of Denver.

## The Capture of the Espinosas\*

THOMAS T. TOBIN

Fort Garland, Costilla County  
March 23, 1895

A statement dictated by Thomas T. Tobin about Felipe Nerio Espinosa and Vivian Espinosa, who formerly lived in Cucheti, New Mexico, and moved from there to San Luis Valley, Conejos County, and lived in a little town on Conejos Creek called San Rafael, in the edge of the mountains. They commenced stealing horses. The next known of them they stopped a wagon in New Mexico between Santa Fe and Galisteo; this in the Spring of 1863. The wagon was loaded with some goods belonging to a Priest stationed in Galisteo who had a little store there; the teamster, a Mexican, was from Conejos County, Colorado. The Espinosas took and tied him. He knew the Espinosas although they were masked. They took what they wanted out of the wagon, then tied the teamster up in a knot and swung him up to a staple on the end of the wagon tongue and started the team on. The wagon was met by a man who untied the teamster and was soon overtaken by the Priest. The teamster told the Priest what had happened and who the men were and where they lived. The Priest rode back to Santa Fe and told General Carlton what had happened, that the men [were] Espinosas from Conejos County. There was another man with the Espinosas but he did not touch the wagon.

General Carlton sent orders to Fort Garland to Captain Eaton of New Mexico Volunteers belonging to Kit Carson's regiment, to go to Conejos, capture the Espinosas and send them to Santa Fe. Captain Eaton sent one Lieutenant Hutt with fifteen Mexican soldiers, one American Sergeant for the purpose of capturing the Espinosas. They were joined at Conejos by a Deputy U. S. Marshal named George Austin, they went and found the Espinosas. Lieut. Hutt told them that they were recruiting soldiers and asked them if they would enlist. They told him they would let him know the next morning. Hutt went to the house the next morning. Vivian Espinosa stepped out and met them. Hutt asked them if they would enlist. Vivian said he would ask his brother — [name filled in with pencil, but illegible]. If he was willing to enlist if he was, all right; if not, neither would he. When the

\*The notorious Espinosa outlaws in 1863 spread a reign of terror among Colorado pioneers, for they were killing without provocation. After several unsuccessful pursuits, their murderous course was ended by the old scout Thomas T. Tobin, who brought to Fort Garland as evidence the heads of the assassins. The story of the Espinosas, here published, was dictated by Tobin in 1895 and the original manuscript was sent to the State Historical Society at Tobin's request by Charles John of Fort Garland in 1901. We have inserted punctuation, have capitalized the beginning of sentences and have divided the story into paragraphs; otherwise this printed copy follows the original manuscript.—Ed.

brother refused to enlist. Vivian also refused. Then Lieut. Hutt made a grab at him and said, you are my prisoner. He answered, "No, I am not," springing into the house where his brother was. They had no weapons with them. The house was a log house. They knocked the chinking out between the logs and the woman passed their weapons to them from the adjoining room. They then sprang out amongst the soldiers, killed one Corporal, scattered the soldiers and made their way to the Mountain and escaped. In pursuing them the Deputy Marshal's horse fell and hurt his leg badly.



COURTESY OF A. B. SANFORD

THOMAS T. TOBIN

(Tobin is dressed in the buckskin suit presented him by Gov. Evans.  
Photograph taken in Denver in 1895.)

From this time they swore vengeance and commenced killing all the whites they could—particularly Americans. In the summer of 1863 they were killing miners when they were pursued by a party of miners and others who as far as I could learn were commanded by Col. Shoup. They killed a brother of Col. Shoup. The miners were from California Gulch. Besides Col. Shoup, I only got acquainted with two of the pursuers, Judge Wells of Canon

City and Joseph Lamb, who killed the younger Espinosa. When the oldest one of the Espinosas escaped and was on his way to Conejos, he killed old man Bruce on Hardscrabble Creek and he killed some other old man, I could not learn the name of.<sup>1</sup> He then came to the Conejos and there killed a man, Bill Smith.

He then took a young man said to be his nephew with him. Governor Evans came to Conejos on some business with the Ute Indians. While the Governor was at Major Head's (as near as I can remember, Col. Chivington was with him), they saw the Governor and party through the window at Major Head's but did not know the Governor. Espinosa and companion came to the Sangre de Christo Mountains to head off the Governor and see if he would pardon him, and if not, to kill him while they were in the Sangre de Christo Mountains. They killed two men, one of them was a Canadian-Frenchman named Leon Constantine; the name of the other I could not learn.

On the fifth of September, 1863, Espinosa and companion attacked a man and woman from Trinidad. The man's name was Philbrook; the woman was a Mexican woman named Delores Sanchez. The woman was coming to the Costilla to visit her relatives. Just as they were entering the Canon of Sangre de Christo, riding in a buggy, they were fired on by the Espinosas, one of the mules was shot. They drove as fast as they could. One of the mules fell dead at the beaver dam. They were overtaken and fired on again and the other mule was killed. Philbrook ran up on the side of the mountain and the assassins after him. The woman went up in the side of the mountain and hid herself behind a big rock, when she saw a couple of Mexicans coming with a wagon. They drove up in front of where she was and stopped. The woman came down from where she was hidden to where the Mexicans were. One of the Mexicans was named Pedro Garcia and could speak good English.

The woman told Pedro what had happened; he told her to get in his wagon and he would try to save her. The Espinosas came running down to where he had the woman in the wagon. They called out, "What people? Answer quick or we will fire on you. We are the Espinosas." Pedro answered, "Mexicans." Espinosa asked, "Did you meet or see a Gringo running down the road?" He answered that he saw a man running down the mountain and he motioned to him to go back. They said that was the Gringo they were after; they could run him down before he got to Fort Garland and kill him. They asked, "Did you see a

<sup>1</sup>This reference most probably is to Henry Harkens, who was killed at what is known as Dead Man's Canyon, south of Colorado Springs. See "The Story of Dead Man's Canyon and of the Espinosas" in the *Colorado Magazine* of January, 1931.—Ed.

woman about here?" Pedro denied the woman to them, when she poked her head out of the wagon. Espinosa said, "Put that prostitute of the American out of the wagon or we will fire on you." He refused to put her out although he had no weapons. The woman cried, "Don Pedro, don't perish for me; they are Christians and won't hurt me," and got down from the wagon. They told Pedro to drive off. They took the lines off the harness and tied the woman hand and foot and abused her disgracefully according to her own testimony.

They started off to see if they could kill Philbrook before he could get to Fort Garland. They left the woman in such a manner that she had hard work to get loose. When loose she went and hid behind the same rock where she was hidden before. The Espinosas got back to where they had left the woman between sundown and dark. They burnt the buggy. They were saying to one another, where could that huzzy have gone to—they would get her again in the morning.

When Philbrook got to the Fort, he stated the case to Colonel Sam Tappan, who was then in command of Fort Garland. This being the third or fourth of people being fired on in the mountains, he sent out about twenty soldiers to find out what they could of Pedro Garcia and to see if they could find the woman. They crossed the mountains and at the Fort they overhauled Pedro Garcia and learned from him that the bandits were Espinosa and companion, but Garcia did not know what had become of the woman. The soldiers on the road back overtook the woman and brought her in to Fort Garland. The soldiers came across some Mexican men traveling and they knew nothing of the woman, but one man had seen a woman traveling on the side of the mountain and reported the case and brought the woman in.

Col. Tappan, after questioning the woman, sent after me to my ranch and for me to go prepared for a trip in the mountains. I went immediately, went to his call. He stated to me what he had been informed, he told me to go and see the woman, she had told him that she had known me for some years. I went by Col. Tappan's order and questioned the woman carefully. She said that she knew they were the Espinosas because she heard them tell Pedro Garcia who they were and how they had maltreated her at the time.

Col. Tappan then told me he wanted me to go after them. I then told him I would go. He said if I would go capture them and bring their heads to him, he would see I was recompensed for it, for me to be careful and not make a mistake and bring other parties. He asked me how many soldiers I wanted to go with me. I was then called aside by Captain Van Vliet, who was

then acting Quarter Master at Fort Garland, who asked me if I knew them soldiers; if I did not, he would advise me not to go with them unless somebody went in command; they were all brave fighting men, if they should become dissatisfied, they would be as apt to kill me as Espinosa. I went to where Col. Tappan was. I told him I would go, but not with the soldiers. He said he wanted me to go but not without protection. I told him a citizen I would like to have with me was away from home. He said I must have soldiers with me for my protection. Lieut. H. W. Baldwin, who was then Adjutant for Col. Tappan, said he would like to go if the Col. would let him. The Col. told him he could go, that he was a man he could depend on.

I left Fort Garland on the seventh of September with Lieut. Baldwin and fifteen soldiers and a citizen by the name of Loring Jinks, one Mexican boy who was in Quarter Master employ named Juan Montolly. I asked the Quarter Master to let me take the boy so he could lead my horse while I tracked the assassins. I found the assassins the first day out. Me and four soldiers chased them through heavy pine and quaking aspen but they got away from us. I then went and took their pony tracks, and followed to a branch that was full of pebbles. They took up this branch. I had told Lieut. Baldwin to go down this branch till he came to the Valley and then to stop till I came to him. The Mexican boy discovered the two assassins and told Lieut. Baldwin, there goes two men on horseback, but could not make the Lieut. understand until he showed him the pony track. They were then just going out of sight over the ridge, were out of sight too quick for the soldier to shoot.

We then struck down the canon towards Fort Garland and camped that night with Tom Barns, who now lives in Tierra Amarilla, Mexico. The next morning we came down the Canon until we got out of sight of a peak, from which they watched the road. I then took up a branch on the left hand side of the Sangre de Christo until we got up in the mountains where we found a lot of pony tracks where the Ute Indians had been. The soldiers scattered in all directions following up the pony tracks. Baldwin and some half dozen soldiers followed me. The balance of the soldiers and Loring Jinks got lost from us. We camped that night in the mountains. We came down out of the mountain on to what is now called Pass Creek. We went around on the dividing ridge and camped on the Veta Mountain.

Next morning went down La Veta Creek, about nine or ten o'clock struck the tracks of two oxen. I got down and examined the trail and found the two assassins were driving them. I tracked them around through the thick groves of pine and quak-

ing asp, soon found they had let one of the oxen go. I knew then they had taken the other ox to their camp to butcher him. It was a great trouble to trail them. It was only by the broken twigs that I could follow them by. Lieut. Baldwin could not follow me with the horses. I told him to go to a certain point we had passed and wait for me there until he heard from me. A soldier named Joe Smith said, "What does this mean? I will go with you." Another said, "So will I." The two soldiers and the Mexican boy went with me.

Many places I would crawl under the fallen timber to keep the direction they were driving the ox, till I got out of the timber into a clear place where I could see their tracks again. I saw some crows flying around in a circle. I told the soldiers I thought they had killed the ox on account of the crows flying around. One more soldier that went with Baldwin came to us. I sent him to tell Baldwin to be sure and wait for me, as I thought I was close to their camps. A third soldier came to me. I went on about a hundred yards further. I discovered some magpies flying around. I watched carefully and soon located their camp. I told the soldiers not to speak, if I raised my hand to squat down and cock their guns but not to fire unless I told them to.

I took a step or two in front and saw the head of one of the assassins. At this time I stepped on a stick and broke it; he heard it crack, he looked and saw me, he jumped and grabbed his gun. Before he turned around fairly I fired and hit him in the side; he bellowed like a bull and cried out, "Jesus favor me," and cried to his companion, "Escape. I am killed." I gave a whoop and sung out, "Yell, boys, I've got him, so if there is more of them they will make their appearance." I tipped my powder horn in my rifle, dropped a bullet from my mouth into the muzzle of my gun while I was capping it. A fellow came out of the ravine, running to an undergrowth of quaking asp. I sung out, "Shoot, boys." The three fired (two soldiers and the Mexican) and missed him. I drew my gun up and fired at first sight and broke his back above his hips. I sent the Mexican boy off on a run to tell Baldwin what had happened.

The four soldiers who were with Baldwin came to where I was. Espinosa had started to crawl away. He did not go very far. He braced himself up against some fallen trees, with pistol in hand waving it over his face, using a word in Mexican that means *base brutes*. I had run down to where he was; I spoke to him and asked him if he knew me. I told him who I was; his reply was *base brutes*. A soldier went to lay his hand on him. I said, look out, he will shoot you. He fired but missed the soldier.

I then caught him by the hair, drew his head back over a fallen tree and cut it off. I sent the Mexican boy to cut off the head of the other fellow; he cut it off and brought it to me. We rushed into their camp, the soldiers gathered their baggage and the woman's dresses and a side saddle she had with her. I took a diary and all the letters and papers I could find in the camp and the rifles, pistols and butcher knives.

This was September tenth, the fourth day out. I put their heads in a sack, came and camped on the Sangre de Christo that night. On the eleventh of September, fifth day out, came into Fort Garland with Lieut. Baldwin and six soldiers. I rode up in front of the Commanding Officer's quarters and called for Col. Tappan. I rolled the assassins heads out of the sack at Col. Tappan's feet. I said, "Here Col., I have accomplished what you wished. This head is Espinosa's. This other is his companion's head and there is no mistake made." Lieut. Baldwin spoke, "Yes, Col., there is no mistake, for we have this diary and letters and papers to show that they are the assassins." The diary showed that they had killed twenty-two up to the date the first Espinosa was killed, not counting the Mexican Corporal, the first killed. Old man Bruce, Bill Smith, and others that they killed afterwards. There was about thirty killed altogether.

After being in Fort Garland a few hours, Col. Tappan told me that he had read in the *Rocky Mountain News* where Governor Evans had offered \$2,500 reward for the capture of the assassins and Lieut. Baldwin said that he had read it. They asked a soldier, "Where was that paper you took from here?" He said, "I took it to the quarters, the Sergeant is reading it." Lieut. Baldwin says lets go and see, but we could not find it. I did not know anything about a reward when I started but I only thought it the duty of all citizens to rid the country of all such characters as quick as possible. All I know about a reward being offered is what I was told by Col. Tappan, Lieut. Baldwin and others. That is the reason why I claimed the reward. No copy of the paper could be found, the printing office was carried off by a flood in Cherry Creek. The foregoing is the truth, no more, no less.

[In another handwriting.]

All the facts in this case can be ascertained by application to Col. G. L. Shoupe, Ex-Governor of Idaho and Ex-Senator of the same State and also Col. Tappan, whose whereabouts I do not know. Under the administration of the Territorial Gov. McCook, I received Five Hundred (\$500.00) dollars and under State Gov. Waite, I received One Thousand (\$1000.00) dollars which was said to be in payment in full for all claims from me against the

State up to date. Colorado at the time I captured the Espinosas was a Territory and was under martial law and I can't see why a State Legislature should hold back One Thousand dollars of the money promised me by the territorial Government under Gov Evans.

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## Mountain Staging in Colorado

ALBERT B. SANFORD

"Six hundred and eighty-seven miles from Leavenworth and we have made it in nineteen days." This was the brief announcement of the driver of the first regular stage and express coach to a crowd assembled in the Cherry Creek settlement on the afternoon of May 7, 1859. From that day until the Denver and Rio Grande railroad was completed over Marshall Pass in the middle '80s and the Barlow & Sanderson stage line operating from La Veta and other terminals of the Rio Grande road closed its career, stages were operated to a considerable extent in Colorado.

Within a month from the discovery of the famous Gregory lode (on May 6, 1859), stage coaches were running from Denver and Auraria, at the mouth of Cherry Creek, to Mountain City (midway between the present towns of Central City and Black Hawk). One route went up Mount Vernon Canyon and by way of Bergen Park to a point near the mouth of North Clear Creek and up that stream to Mountain City. Another entered the mountains to the north of Clear Creek, going via Golden Gate and Dory Hill to the Gregory Gulch region. Horace Greeley, accompanied by Henry Villard and A. D. Richardson, traveled the latter route to investigate the reports of bonanza discoveries made by Gregory and other successful prospectors.

A few weeks after the discoveries of gold quartz lodes and rich placers in the Gregory region, reports reached the Auraria-Denver settlements of equally rich placer deposits in the South Park country. The rush of prospectors that followed resulted in discoveries of gold at Fairplay, Alma, Breckenridge and California Gulch. Many of those who went from the Cherry Creek settlements followed the old Ute Trail over the divide between the foothills southwest of Denver and Turkey Creek, and to the Platte at the present site of Bailey's, from this point following up the stream and over Kenosha Hill to the Tarryall. Tools and supplies were carried on pack animals. The only route possible for wagons led from Colorado City into the South Park.

In the fall months of 1859, the Bradford Road Company surveyed a toll road from Denver up the Platte to a point one mile

north of the present town of Littleton, where the Platte was crossed at Brown's Bridge. From this point an almost due southwest course was followed to the first station, called Bradford (on the site of the present Ken Caryl Ranch), and from thence followed the route to the South Park as above outlined. The road was completed that winter and by spring was open to stage and freight travel. In 1867 a road was constructed through Turkey Creek Canyon and thereafter the Bradford Hill section was abandoned.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel D. A. Butterfield, who had been prominently identified with stage and express operations between the Missouri River and California, conceived the idea of establishing a "short line" between Leavenworth and Denver, via the Smoky Hill route, as selected by General Dodge of the United States Army. The arrival of the first coach over this line at Denver on September 23, 1865, was the occasion of an elaborate welcome to Colonel Butterfield, who was one of the "passengers." The reception committee, composed of many prominent business men and accompanied by a brass band, met the coach four miles up Cherry Creek, "removed" the Colonel to a seat in the best carriage and, headed by the band, the procession entered the then official limits of Denver at the present intersection of Colfax and Broadway.

At this time there were few houses above California Street and the leading hotel was the Planters House, where Colonel Butterfield was permitted to take a short rest before meeting hundreds of enthusiastic admirers. That evening a banquet was given in his honor and the assembly listened with deepest interest to his outline of plans for giving Denver much better stage service.

It happened that about this time General Bela M. Hughes, with a wagon outfit and military escort, had crossed Berthoud Pass from Salt Lake City, Utah, and was camped near Empire. Hughes' plan was to still further shorten the transcontinental route by a new line from Salt Lake to Denver. This route, with the Butterfield connection, would shorten the old route some three hundred miles. But the first transcontinental railroad was on its way across the plains and the shorter stagecoach line never materialized.

In 1873 "Bob" Spotswood and William McClelland began operating a stage and express line from Colorado Springs to Canon City, and via the Arkansas River to Granite and Oro. This was during the period of placer mining along the Arkansas and in California Gulch and was four or five years before the discovery of the great lead-silver deposits that made Leadville famous all

<sup>1</sup>Last summer the writer walked over the section of the old stage road abandoned in 1867. The course is still easily followed, although in many places pine trees of good size have grown where stages and freight wagons once passed in the clear.

over the country. At the same time this firm was running stages from Denver to the South Park region via Morrison and the Turkey Creek Canyon. Under the caption of "Spotswood's Express" the *Rocky Mountain News* of January 19, 1873, tells a story on "Bob."



A SPOTSWOOD & McCLELLAN STAGECOACH USED BETWEEN DENVER AND LEADVILLE  
From an original sketch made in 1880

For some weeks an epidemic of what was called "epizootic" prevailed among horses to such an extent that the few available mules were soon picked up by Wells Fargo and other large users of horseflesh. Spotswood had a contract for carrying United States mail over the South Park route but was unable to locate a single mule to use in the emergency. With a reputation of prompt and efficient service as a stage and mail man to sustain, he was fortunate in finding some well-trained oxen that made slow but sure substitutes for horses. On one of such trips he carried an unusually heavy lot of mail and express and a single passenger. Some miles above Slaght's station and while passing through a stretch of timber, his ox team suddenly and without any apparent cause, stampeded. The lone passenger jumped as the oxen started to run, and both he and Spotswood could only watch as the wagon was demolished and its contents scattered in the deep snow.

For the first time in his career, Spotswood left his mail and

express without guarding and walked to Kenosha Hill, several miles up grade, where he and his passenger arrived so exhausted that efforts to recover his scattered load was deferred until next morning. Then with volunteer help from the station employees he returned and secured the entire lot, found the oxen a mile distant and with another wagon, fortunately available, reloaded and proceeded to his destination without further mishap.

When the magnitude of the Leadville discoveries were recognized by the post office officials the Government advertised for bids to furnish a daily mail service from Denver to Leadville. Spotswood hurried to Washington and secured the contract. Establishment of the line necessitated heavy investments in horses and stage coaches, but with abundant capital this was accomplished and the line thoroughly equipped.

Governor Evans had planned to build a railroad to Georgetown and over the Continental Divide west. It was completed to Morrison in June, 1874, but by reason of failure to raise the necessary capital, the line went no farther. In the meantime, Spotswood and McClelland made connection with the railroad at that point each morning and landed their passengers at Fairplay that night.

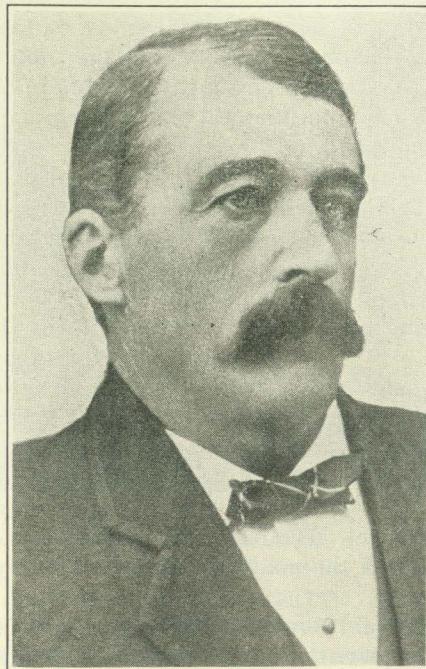
Governor Evans and associates were quick to recognize the chance to reach Leadville by way of Platte Canon and began railroad construction from the mouth of Bear Creek by that route. When the track was laid to Pine Grove, Spotswood & McClelland abandoned the line from Morrison and began carrying passengers and mail from the new terminal. By this time the traffic had so greatly increased and the mail had become so heavy that the Government ordered the service doubled. Spotswood agreed to the difficult conditions laid down by the Department and again went east for more equipment. On his return he began running four four-horse stages each way daily. In the meantime Evans was employing all the men and teams he could use in pushing construction of the railroad, and the terminal was being advanced steadily.

In early January, 1880, the writer, then a boy of 18, went over the South Park railroad to the then terminal at Weston, some twelve miles west of Como. This was the last terminal until the road reached Buena Vista on the Arkansas River some weeks later.

Weston was on an open prairie with no limit of room for accumulated freight of every description. There was no effort made to shelter the enormous amount of machinery and merchandise, but some semblance of order was had by piling articles separately and so arranging the piles that teams could pass through what might have been called "lanes." Even though this place was to

exist as a terminal but a brief time, there were scores of lumber shacks for the accommodation—but not quite comfort—of travelers, freighters and railroad men. Saloons and gambling places occupied the most pretentious of the shacks.

It was here the writer first met "Bob" Spotswood and noted his masterful method of handling his part of the enormous traffic to Leadville. At this time he was handling over a hundred passengers daily and was using five four-horse coaches each way.



ROBERT J. SPOTSWOOD

"Colonel" Spotswood, as he was called in those days, enjoyed the reputation of employing only the very best of drivers. Some of them had worked under him when he held the position of Superintendent of both the Julesburg and Laramie divisions of the Overland Stage Line out of Denver.

It is doubtful if the conditions attending the construction of any other railroad equaled those met with by the South Park organization. Certainly few roads, if any, paid dividends to stockholders while the line was being built, as did the South Park. Its success in handling passengers, express and mail was due in large part to the nearly perfect connections and dependable service of the stage company. Governor Evans was one of the great Colorado

railroad builders and "Bob" Spotswood's ability as a stage manager ranked with the best of Overland executives. Their intimate business relations were finely balanced by personal friendship that commenced with Evans' arrival in the Territory as its second governor in 1862. Governor Evans died in 1897. Spotswood lived until April, 1910.

On no other stage line in Colorado did stagecoach service attain the magnitude and the perfection that was reached by the Spotswood stages to Leadville in the boom days preceding the coming of the railroad.

## Otto Mears, "Pathfinder of the San Juan"

LEROY R. HAFEN

As a pioneer builder of trails, wagon roads and railroads in southwestern Colorado, Otto Mears earned the title, "Pathfinder of the San Juan." Dealings with the Ute Indians, development of mining property, and activity in the political life of Colorado, all were influential in distinguishing him as one of the notable pioneers and builders of this state.

Otto Mears came of mixed English and Jewish stock and was born on May 3, 1840, in Kurland, Russia.<sup>1</sup> The conditions of his childhood were far from promising. Orphaned at the age of two, he was taken into the family of an uncle who had thirteen children of his own. When ten years old he left Russia, crossed Germany, and sailed for America, reaching New York City and continuing by way of Panama to California. At San Francisco he was to have met an uncle, but failed to find him. Except for a little help given him by the kind woman who had looked after him on the voyage, young Otto was thrown upon his own resources. In a strange land, unable to speak English, his difficulties can well be imagined. He began selling newspapers on the streets of San Francisco and later took odd jobs of various kinds. As an older boy he picked up the trade of tinsmith and found employment in mining camps of California and Nevada.

At the outbreak of the Civil War he joined Company H of the First California Volunteers and accompanied his regiment on its march to New Mexico. Here he took part in campaigns against hostile Indians and helped to thwart the plans of the Texans to conquer New Mexico, Colorado and California.

<sup>1</sup>This information is from Mr. Mears' daughter, Mrs. J. R. Pitcher, of Pasadena, California. For further data on Mears see Sidney Jocknick, *Early Days on the Western Slope of Colorado and Campfire Chats with Otto Mears* and the biographical sketches of Mears in the histories of Colorado by W. F. Stone, by J. C. Smiley, and by Baker and Hafen.

Upon expiration of his term of military service, he became a store clerk in Santa Fe. Then with a stock of general merchandise he began business for himself at Conejos, Colorado, in 1865. He formed a partnership with Major Lafayette Head in the establishment of a saw mill and grist mill in this primitive Spanish-American village. The millstones were home-made, the wooden wheel of the mill was tied with rawhide, and wooden pegs rather than nails were used in the building. To increase the grists for the flour mill Mears began wheat farming some sixty-five miles to the north, at



CHIEF OURAY AND OTTO MEARS  
(Taken in 1870)

Saguache, and to facilitate this work brought the first mower, reaper and threshing machine into the San Luis Valley. Increased flour production necessitated an enlarged market. He found demand for flour at the mining camps of Granite and California Gulch on the Upper Arkansas, but there was no wagon road to this market. He therefore built a road over Poncha Pass and to the Arkansas. This incidental project, his first toll road, inaugurated the great road building projects that were to become his chief contribution to the upbuilding of Colorado.

When rich mines were discovered in the inaccessible San Juan Mountains, Mears organized a company to build a toll road to the region. To aid in booming the district he published newspapers at Saguache and Lake City. The miners demanded the cession of the San Juan mineral section of the Ute reservation to the whites. Commissioner Brunot, with the assistance of Mr. Mears, induced the Indians to cede the large rectangle containing the mines. Through the high mountains of this region Mears now extended his system of toll roads until they embraced three hundred miles of road. He obtained contracts for carrying the mail to the camps.

After the Meeker massacre of 1879 Mears assisted General Adams in rescuing the women captives. He then accompanied Chief Ouray and an Indian delegation to Washington, where a treaty was negotiated for further reducing the Indian reservation. The Utes at home refused at first to accept the treaty, but Mears secured their acceptance by privately paying the Indians two dollars apiece. One of the other members of the Indian Commission preferred charges of bribery against Mears and he was called before the Secretary of the Interior. Mr. Mears said that the Utes preferred two dollars apiece in cash to the promised interest on a million dollars. The Department reimbursed him for the \$2,800 he had expended.

In the Indian Commission Mears was the leader in choosing the site for the Indians' new reservation. In response to the urgent demands of Colorado citizens, he gave the stipulations of the Ute Treaty a very elastic interpretation, and accordingly the Indians were removed from Colorado to a reservation in eastern Utah. The removal was effected by use of the military. The whites immediately flocked into the abandoned Ute Reservation, and the cities of Grand Junction, Montrose and Delta quickly sprang up.

In Montrose Mears became a leading citizen. He continued his toll road building and operated freighting outfits over the roads and pack mule trains on the trails. Then he began railroad construction, building the Rio Grande Southern and the Silverton Northern railroads in the San Juan region of southwestern Colo-

rado. He also acquired an interest in certain mining and smelter properties in the district.

In 1884 he was elected to the Colorado legislature and continued for many years thereafter as a very important influence in the Republican party of the state. He served for many years on the State Capitol Commission.

Mears accumulated a fair-sized fortune, much of which was lost in the panic of 1893. His last railroad venture was the building of the Chesapeake Beach Railroad in Maryland. In New York he was associated with the Mack brothers in building the Mack truck. Upon moving to California in 1920, he developed ranch and hotel property there.

Mr. Mears was small of stature, with dark hair and black, beady eyes. He was quick in speech and movement, was jovial, and made friends readily. In 1870 he married Mary Kampfschulte and two daughters were born to them. His portrait appearing in one of the stained glass windows of the Colorado capitol and an historical tablet set in the granite wall of the mountain beside one of his picturesque pioneer roads in the San Juan Mountains near present Ouray, Colorado, testify to the esteem in which he was held by his fellow citizens of Colorado. He died at Pasadena, California, on June 24, 1931.

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